# A Treatise on Christian Baptism

265.1
B415

*Joseph Agar Beet.*

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

REC'D

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/treatiseonchrist0000jose

# A TREATISE

ON

# CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

By the same Author.

*Crown 8vo, price 6s. 6d.*

THROUGH CHRIST TO GOD:
A STUDY IN SCIENTIFIC THEOLOGY.

I. Preliminaries.
II. Justification through Faith.
III. The Death of Christ.
IV. The Son of God.
V. The Resurrection of Christ.

*Fifth Edition, Crown 8vo, cloth, 1s.*

HOLINESS AS UNDERSTOOD BY THE WRITERS OF THE BIBLE.

"A very useful little treatise."—The Expositor.

*For other works by the same author, see end of this volume.*

London: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27, Paternoster Row.

UG22
B393t

# A TREATISE

ON

# CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

BY

JOSEPH AGAR BEET, ~~D.D.~~

76p. 18½ cm.

~~*SECOND EDITION.*~~

Baptism
t

London:
HODDER AND STOUGHTON,
~~27, PATERNOSTER ROW.~~

~~MDCCCXCII.~~
1892

LIBRARY
CENTRAL BAPTIST SEMINARY
KANSAS CITY 2, KANSAS

*Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.*

265.1
B415

# PREFACE.

THE following treatise is an amended and enlarged reprint of papers which appeared in the *British Weekly* during March and April of the present year.

To my argument several critics object, that all sorts of serious errors are modifications of New Testament teaching, and that my proof of Infant Baptism is overturned by my own disproof of Baptismal Regeneration. But I have endeavoured to show that, whereas this last doctrine contradicts utterly the broad principles of the New Covenant, the practice of Infant Baptism is in complete harmony with them and with still broader principles underlying both Old and New Covenants. This complete difference robs their reply of all force. I have also shown that Infant Baptism embodies in the best mode an all-important truth needing ever to be kept in view, which if not thus embodied would leave the New Covenant in one important point inferior to the Old. These arguments, the critics referred to have overlooked. Their oversight implies that we are bound to reproduce to the letter the forms of Church life described in the New Testament. This silent assumption marks the difference between their standpoint and mine. And on this ground

26568

the whole question must be decided. Is Christianity a life adapting itself, in harmony with its own vital principles, to its varying environment? Or is it a verbal prescription admitting of no development and adjustment?

Fortunately, as I have shown in Section ii., our Baptist brethren are illogical. Otherwise they would need to reconstruct the polity of their own Churches. For there is nothing like a solitary pastorate in the New Testament. And it is a serious modification of the Church polity there described. This modification, however, which our brethren have long retained as suited to their needs, I have endeavoured to justify, on the principles advocated in this treatise.

So far as I have seen, no critic has ventured to deal with my argument about the Lord's Day.

My readers must judge whether, as Dr. Clifford implies in a paper in the *British Weekly*, Infant Baptism as I have expounded it is "practically destructive of New Testament Baptism and fearfully generative of the errors of Baptismal Regeneration." But I greatly rejoice to hear from him that the Church over which he presides practises "the dedication of children in the presence of the congregation (or at home) to God our Father, in recognition of His redeeming love, and of our obligation as Christians to train them in a knowledge of its sweetness and power." May such recognition become universal in the Baptist Churches. To whatever extent it prevails, it is a debt due to the Churches which during long centuries have baptized infants.

May such mutual indebtedness greatly increase, each Church borrowing from all others whatever good they possess, that thus the blessings conferred upon one Church may become an enrichment to all.

As this leaves my hand I have received a *Handbook of Scriptural Church Principles* published at the Wesleyan Book Room. I observe with pleasure, so far as a hasty perusal will permit, that its exposition of Christian Baptism is practically the same as that which I have here given. The whole chapter is worthy of careful study.

RICHMOND, *7th September*, 1888.

# CONTENTS.


| *Section* | | *Page* |
|---|---|---|
| I. | The Teaching of the New Testament | 11 |
| | Note on the word Covenant | 24 |
| II. | The Baptism of Infants | 28 |
| | Note on Proselyte Baptism | 43 |
| III. | Baptismal Regeneration | 44 |
| IV. | The Significance and Benefit of the Baptism of Infants | 56 |
| V. | The Relation of Baptized Children to the Church | 63 |
| APPENDIX. | References to Baptism by early Christian Writers | 72 |

A TREATISE ON

# CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

## *SECTION I.*

### *THE TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

IN this treatise I shall discuss the purpose and significance of Christian Baptism, the proper subjects of the rite, the special significance and benefits of the Baptism of Infants, and the relation of baptized children to the Church of Christ.

Our inquiry takes us back to the dawn of the New Covenant.

The silence of centuries was suddenly broken, 1850 years ago, on the desolate banks of the Jordan, by the fearless voice of a prophet of strange apparel and bearing. For the first time in the memory of living men, crowds hung upon the lips of a religious teacher. Much that he said was in the strain of the ancient prophets, whose words, treasured in their Sacred Books, were familiar to all his hearers. One thing, however, was new, and was so distinctive as to give to the strange

teacher his most common and enduring designation: he was JOHN THE BAPTIZER.

Even this feature was not altogether new to the practice and thought of Israel. According to the prescriptions of the Law of Moses, in many cases of ceremonial defilement the unclean one needed to be purified by water before he could again approach the sanctuary. Of this we find a good example in Numbers xix. 11—22, where a man who has touched a corpse is required to be sprinkled with water by a man not himself defiled, and afterwards to bathe himself in water. We notice also that in Sirach xxxiv. 25 this purification is described by a word which afterwards became the technical term for the rite performed by John: *A man who is baptized from a corpse and again touches it, what is he profited by his washing?* So in Mark vii. 4, in reference to other similar purifications, e.g. those prescribed in Leviticus xi. 32, we read of *baptisms of cups and pots and brazen vessels*, and are told that the Pharisees returning *from market do not eat until they have baptized themselves.* These ceremonial purifications had already moulded the language of much of the moral teaching of the Old Testament. So we read in Psalm li. 7: *purify* (literally, *un-sin*) *me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* And in Isa. i. 15, 16: *Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean.* Complete purification of the inner life was a conspicuous feature of the future deliverance seen from afar by enraptured seers. And it was frequently presented under the figure of washing with water. So Ezekiel xxxvi. 25: *I will sprinkle clean water upon you,*

*and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols I will cleanse you.* And Zechariah xiii. 1: *In that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.* These ancient practices, teaching, and prophecies, the Baptism of John could hardly fail to recall to the minds of multitudes around him.

With Baptism was associated personal confession of sin. So Matthew iii. 6: *They were baptized in Jordan by him, confessing their sins.* And, by submitting to the rite, the baptized one acknowledged that the sins he confessed were a stain needing to be washed away. That the rite was never self-administered, but always received from one who claimed to be sent by God, or possibly from some one acting under his direction, taught plainly that the sinner needs a purification altogether beyond his own power. We notice also that John proclaimed the insufficiency of his own Baptism, and announced the approach of a Baptizer greater than himself and of a Baptism not with water but with the Holy Spirit. This last announcement recalls the prophecy of Ezekiel quoted above, where God goes on to promise, *I will put My Spirit within you.*

The baptized ones became, and were known as, *disciples of John*: John iii. 25, iv. 1. Some of them remained such even after the appearance of Jesus, and as distinguished from His disciples: Matthew ix. 14, xi. 2. But, although doubtless they clung together, we have no proof that they were formed into an organized society.

From John iii. 22 we learn that soon after His appearance Christ began to baptize. The number baptized soon

became large, and the administration of the rite was committed to His disciples: ch. iv. 2. Whether or not the persons baptized were then enrolled as members of a society, we do not know. But the emphatic announcement by Christ, as recorded in Matt. xvi. 18, in circumstances specially solemn, *I will build My Church: and the Gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,* teaches clearly that the founding of a society was an essential part of the work He came to do. This truth will shed important light on the matter before us.

In the last words of Christ recorded in the First Gospel, words spoken apparently only to the eleven Apostles, we have the formal appointment of Baptism as an abiding rite of the Church: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them.* This does not mean, according to the more probable reading, that Baptism was to be the method of making disciples, but simply that while gathering learners for the school of Christ the Apostles were to baptize them, and also to teach them whatever Christ had commanded. The accompanying promise proclaims clearly that the rite was designed to continue *to the end of the world.*

With these words of Christ, those recorded in Mark xvi. 16 agree so completely that it is almost needless to inquire whether they originally formed part of the Second Gospel. By solemnly ordaining Baptism our Lord made it obligatory on all who seek His favour; and thus made it a condition of salvation. For we cannot enjoy His smile while we refuse to obey His express command. We therefore do not wonder

to find that in this passage salvation is promised only to those who both believe the Gospel and confess their faith by receiving Baptism; *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* The absolute rigour of the second condition is somewhat softened by its absence from the latter clause: *he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.* In view of this command, thousands in all ages and countries, seeking salvation, have received the sacred rite at great cost and peril. They have dared thus to confess Christ in joyful confidence that He will confess them before His Father in heaven.

Very humbly and reverently we now ask, Why did Christ, in full view of the tremendous loss and peril it would in many cases involve, require this formal confession? Why did He, in a spiritual religion, ordain an outward rite as a condition of salvation? A partial answer is not far to seek. Christ ordained and required the outward rite of Baptism in order that Christianity might assume visible form before men and present to the world a united front, and in order that His servants might recognise each other and thus be able to stand shoulder to shoulder in the great conflict strengthened by mutual counsel and encouragement. For this end He required His servants to confess Him; and ordained Baptism as a specific mode of confession.

Similarly, among other reasons, Christ ordained the Lord's Supper, the one recurrent rite of His Church, in order to maintain in it unity, and the strength of unity.

The above exposition will shed light upon, and receive

support from, all other references to Baptism in the New Testament.

We understand now the startling exhortation of Ananias to Saul of Tarsus recorded in Acts xxii. 16: *Arise and baptize thyself and wash away thy sins.* These strong words evidently mean, Remove the stain of thy sins by the water of Baptism. Ananias knew that Christ had expressly ordained and commanded the rite; and had thus made it a condition of His favour and of the salvation He proclaimed. Therefore, for the repentant persecutor, there was no forgiveness and purification except by formal confession of Christ in Baptism. Now, to our thought, a condition performed in order to attain a result dependent upon it is a means to that end. Consequently, Ananias could speak, and in this passage does speak, of Baptism as a means of salvation.

The strange occurrence here of the middle voice, *baptize-thyself*, reminds us that in his Baptism Saul was himself the most conspicuous actor. Somewhat similar, but without any reference to Baptism, the persons addressed being already baptized, are St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians vii. 1: *let us cleanse ourselves.* So 1 John iii. 3: *he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself.* By faith we claim the purity which, through the death of Christ, the Spirit of God works in those who believe. For faith is the condition on which that purity is given. Therefore, in this correct sense, we are exhorted to purify ourselves.

The passage just expounded sheds light upon Titus iii. 5. Long after his own Baptism at Damascus. Paul wrote

to this Gentile convert, *God saved us by means of the laver* (or *bath*) of the New Birth. And we have no need to deny a reference here to the rite of Baptism. The words which follow, *renewing by the Holy Spirit*, remind us that these persons were *born of water and Spirit.*

These last words are from the lips of Christ speaking to Nicodemus, as recorded in John iii. 5. And they are easily explained. This member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, and apparently (see verse 4) an old man, shrank from the public confession involved in the water of Baptism. But in these words the *teacher sent from God* reminds him that the New Birth wrought by the Spirit, without which none can see the Kingdom of God, is only for those who confess Christ in His appointed way, that even for Nicodemus there was no way into the Kingdom except through the gate of Baptism. The *water* is mentioned first as that which presented to Nicodemus the chief obstacle to salvation. It is mentioned only once, while the *Spirit* occurs in verses 5—8 three times, because He is the active Personal Agent, whereas Baptism is only a condition of the New Birth.

In complete harmony with Mark xvi. 16 are two other well-known references to Baptism. In Galatians iii. 26, St. Paul declares that his readers *are all sons of God through faith;* and at once supports his words by saying that by their Baptism, which he assumes all to have received, they *have put on Christ*, and therefore, like Him, are sons of God. He thus links together Baptism and (see ch. iv. 5) adoption into the family of God. But the Baptism referred to is, as the order of the verses proves, a confession of personal

faith. This connection of faith and Baptism is equally conspicuous in Colossians ii. 12, where the Apostle teaches that they who have been *buried with Christ in Baptism* have also been *raised together with Him by means of their faith in the energy of God who raised Him from the dead.* Similar teaching in Romans vi. 4: *We were buried with Him by means of Baptism for death.*

In Acts x. 47, 48 is recorded the Baptism of some who had already received the Holy Spirit. This proves that the outward rite was needful even for those who had indisputably obtained inward spiritual life.

In 2 Corinthians xii. 13 we read: *In one Spirit we all were baptized into one body . . . and all were made to drink one Spirit.* This refers probably to Baptism by water. For we have here no suggestion of any other than the ordinary meaning of the word *baptize.* St. Paul is speaking of the Church which is the *body* of Christ, and of the Holy *Spirit* who is its animating principle. By Baptism, his readers entered the Church and were thus united to the body of Christ. And by faith, of which their Baptism was a confession, they obtained (Galatians iii. 2) the gift of the Spirit. Consequently, to St. Paul's thought the outward condition, and the inward Source, of the new life were closely associated: *In one Spirit* they *were baptized into one body.* Similarly in John iii. 5 we have a birth *of water and Spirit:* So in Acts ii. 38 we read: *Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* On the other hand, St. Paul never uses the phrase *baptize with the Holy Spirit,* found in Matthew iii. 11, Mark i. 8,

Luke iii. 16, John i. 33, Acts i. 5. If our exposition be correct, we have in 1 Corinthians xii. 13 a definite reference to Baptism as the outward and visible gate into the Church and into the company of those savingly joined to each other and to Christ.

One more reference demands attention. In a passage otherwise very difficult we read, *water, which as an antitype now saveth you, even Baptism*: 1 Peter iii. 21. These words present no difficulty. For in all human language we may, leaving out of sight the first cause, attribute a result to its instrumental or proximate cause. If, as we have seen, Baptism is a condition, and in this sense an instrument, of salvation, St. Peter could rightly say, as he here says, *Baptism saveth you.*

The above are the chief references to Baptism in the New Testament. And they represent fairly its entire teaching. All other references agree with those expounded above. In all of them Baptism is the formal and visible gate through which the members of the Apostolic Churches entered the company of the professed followers of Christ, a gate erected by Christ as, for them, the only way of salvation. And this explains a few remarkable passages noted above in which Baptism is spoken of not only as a condition, but as a means, of salvation. The great importance of the rite, implied in these references to it, I have already in part endeavoured to explain.

So far I have spoken of Baptism chiefly as a divinely-appointed and obligatory mode of confessing personal faith in Christ, looking upon the rite as though it were an act of the person baptized. But we must never forget

that, as matter of fact, no one baptized himself. This proves that in Baptism there is much more than personal confession. We seek its further significance.

In Baptism the already-existing Church received into its fold a new convert. For the person baptized became at once a member of the Society founded by Christ. On the other hand, but for the Church, there had been no preached word, no faith, no convert, and no confession of faith. Now the Church is a living embodiment of the New Covenant. It rests upon the great historic fact that in Christ God has come near to man and entered into definite engagement to give to him certain good things on certain conditions. From this Covenant flow all the blessings obtained by faith in Christ. And the objective fact of the Covenant is of infinitely greater importance than the faith or confession of any one baptized person.

Had we been present at the Baptism of Saul of Tarsus, our eyes would have been fixed upon the new convert, and our thoughts fixed upon the submission to Christ of so determined an enemy. Probably, the baptized one's own thought, as he came humbly and passive to receive the rite, would be that the ancient promises were now fulfilled, and that in Jesus of Nazareth whom he had so bitterly persecuted a fountain had been opened for the house of David for sin and for uncleanness. In other words, whereas to onlookers the personal act of Saul would be the most conspicuous element of the rite, to the baptized person himself the one all-absorbing thought would be about the infinite blessings objectively given to man once for all in Christ and in the New Covenant. By recalling

that Covenant, Baptism becomes a divinely-erected monument of it.

This second view of the significance of Baptism is strongly confirmed by two important analogies. Of these, the first is found in the initial rite of the Old Covenant. The close analogy between the two Covenants suggests irresistibly this comparison of their initial rites. But in making it we must carefully bear in mind both the elements common to the two Covenants and the essential differences between them. Almost everything in the New Covenant is found in germ in the Old. And in every case the germ receives a development in harmony with the peculiar spirit of the New Covenant.

At the institution of the earlier rite in Genesis xvii. 10, God used these strong words: *This is My Covenant which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.* God thus made it a visible monument or *token* (verse 11) of His Covenant with Abraham; and, as expressly stated in verse 14, a condition of the blessings of that Covenant. Thus in the analogous rite of Circumcision we find the two elements noted above in Baptism. Each rite was on the one hand a monument of the great fact that God had entered into covenant with man, and on the other hand a formal and personal acknowledgment of loyalty to God, an acknowledgment required by God as a condition of His favour.

A second analogy is found in the Lord's Supper. Although in the New Testament the two rites are never associated or even mentioned together, (except possibly by

casual and silent reference, as in 1 Corinthians x. 2, 3,) the Church has in all ages, guided by true spiritual instinct, joined them together as the two sacraments, or at least as the Roman Church teaches the two chief sacraments, of the Christian religion. They stand together in a unique position as the only outward rites designed for all the servants of Christ. We therefore expect to find, underlying the special significance peculiar to each, a deeper and broader significance common to the two sacraments ordained by Christ.

In close analogy with the ancient rite of circumcision, at the institution of His Supper our Lord said, as recorded in 1 Corinthians xi. 25, *This cup is the New Covenant in My blood.* In each case, the meaning is the same. Circumcision and the Lord's Supper were visible monuments of the all-important historic fact that God had drawn near to man and placed man in special relation to Himself.

In view then of the connection between Baptism and Circumcision, as the initial rites of the New and Old Covenants respectively, and of that between Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the two universal rites of the Church of Christ, it is impossible to doubt that also Baptism was designed to be a visible monument of the New Covenant. That Christ erected two such monuments, need not surprise us. For the fact thus commemorated is infinitely the greatest of human history. The one monument stands at the entrance to the Christian life, and reminds us that they only can come to God whose hearts have been cleansed from the stain of sin, a cleansing beyond their own power, but wrought by Christ in all who believe the

Gospel. The other monument is recurrent along the whole way to heaven, and reminds us that the blessings of the New Covenant come through the blood and death of Christ and that only from His pierced body and shed blood do we derive the nutriment needful for our daily spiritual life.

Christian Baptism then has a double significance. It is a divinely-erected monument of the New Covenant, and of the purification therein required and imparted. And this monument of the Covenant is also the divinely-erected gate through which men born in Judaism and Heathenism entered the company of the professed servants of Christ. Either of these aspects may for the moment claim chief or sole attention. So in Romans iv. 11 St. Paul speaks of the circumcision of Abraham as *a seal of the faith which he had while yet uncircumcised*, overlooking for the moment the main significance of the rite as asserted by God at its institution. But the view he took of the rite, though not even suggested in Genesis, was a legitimate inference from the narrative there; and bore directly upon the matter the Apostle had in hand, viz., the analogy between Abraham's faith and faith in Christ. The other aspect had no such bearing; and was therefore passed over by St. Paul in silence. So we, contemplating Christian Baptism as pourtrayed in the New Testament, thought first of it as a confession of faith and as a condition of salvation. Our second thoughts revealed a profounder significance of the sacred rite, viz., the New Covenant, purposed in eternity and manifested in Christ, the divine source and foundation of all Christian faith, confession, and life. As administered by the Church, Baptism represents the work once for all

done by God for man. As received by the individual it represents man's appropriation to himself of the offered blessings. Thus the Sacrament of Baptism reflects in itself the two aspects of that New Covenant of which it is a sign and seal; and links together God and Man.

The common Hebrew word rendered COVENANT denotes always an agreement in which each of two contracting parties binds himself to certain action on condition of certain action by the other party. A covenant thus unites two parties in a definite relation involving mutual obligations. As examples we may quote Genesis xxi. 27, 32, where Abimelech makes a friendly agreement with Abraham about a well; and ch. xxvi. 28, where Abimelech makes a similar covenant with Isaac. So in ch. xxxi. 44 Laban says to Jacob, *Come now, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.* The express stipulations are given in *vv.* 50—52. Another good example is found in Joshua ix. 6, 7, 11, 15, 16: *And Joshua made peace with them,* with the Gibeonites, *and made a covenant with them to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.* These covenants were voluntary engagements by two contracting parties, engagements which either party might have refused, but which when once made were binding on both.

A very conspicuous feature of the Old Testament is the series of covenants of God with Noah, with Abraham, and with Moses as the leader and representative of Israel. So Genesis vi. 18, ix. 9—16; ch. xv. 18, xvii. 2—21; Exodus vi. 4, 5, xix. 5, xxiv. 7, 8. In these covenants

God graciously bound Himself to bestow certain benefits on certain conditions, and laid upon those to whom the covenant was given, apart from any choice of their own, the strongest possible obligation to fulfil the conditions.

That the same word is used in these two cases, must not be allowed to obscure the great difference between a covenant of man with man and these covenants of God with man. The former becomes valid only by the agreement of both parties. Either party might have refused the agreement, and would then have been free from its obligations. But, for man to refuse a covenant offered by God, is disobedience and rebellion. His obligations rest, not in the least degree on his own consent, but simply and only on the command of his King and Creator. For He can do what He will with His Own. Consequently the Covenant of God is practically the same as the commandment of God. So Joshua xxiii. 16: *The Covenant of Jehovah your God, which He commanded you.* And Jeremiah xi. 3—5: *Cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers . . . saying, Obey my voice and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: that I may establish the oath which I sware to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey.* Doubtless the word *covenant* was chosen, in spite of this important difference, in order to emphasise the great truth that God had taken man into special and friendly relation to Himself and had graciously bound Himself to bestow upon him definite and specified benefits on definite conditions. But the difference must not be forgotten.

In Jeremiah xxxi. 31—34 God foretold that in days to come He would make a new covenant with men, a covenant pledging Him to pardon their sins and to write His Law upon their hearts. And at the Last Supper, by the words of its institution already quoted, Christ announced the immediate ratification of this covenant in His own approaching death. This *New Covenant* is an exact counterpart of that given through Moses, differing from it precisely as the Gospel differs from the Law. He who graciously bound Himself to Israel by a special engagement again bound Himself to men in later days, through the Incarnate Son, in a still closer relationship, promising to give pardon, and purity, and eternal life to all who turn from sin, bow to Christ, and believe the good news announced by Him. And, like the Old Covenant, this New Covenant lays upon all who hear the Gospel the strongest possible obligation to fulfil its conditions, an obligation which no refusal of man can set aside or lessen. For every covenant of God implies express command.

It is now evident that a man may stand in one of three relations to the New Covenant. He may fulfil its conditions and thus become a sharer of its blessings. In this case, and in proportion to his faith and obedience, he is in the Covenant in the fullest sense. Or he may, in whole or in part, knowingly refuse to obey the commands of the Covenant and thus reject its offered benefits. But his refusal by no means puts him altogether outside the Covenant, or makes it to him as though it had never been. For his disobedience will be followed by infliction of the punishment threatened in the Covenant. In this

lower, but very real, sense all persons born within sound of the Gospel, and in proportion to their religious advantages, are, whatever they may do, under the dominion of the New Covenant. According to the principles therein set forth they will be judged.

A third class have never heard the Gospel. They also will be judged; but not according to the prescription of Christ, *He that disbelieveth shall be condemned.* For they who have not heard can neither believe nor disbelieve. In this sense, in contrast to the first and second classes, they are outside the Covenant. Yet they are not outside the eternal love of God and His great purpose of salvation. But the love of God will treat them on principles other than those announced in the Gospel of Christ.

The above distinction will greatly help us to understand the purpose and significance of circumcision, of the Lord's Supper, and of Christian Baptism. Each of these was a visible memorial of the great historic fact that God had come near to man, thus laying upon all who hear His voice, apart from any choice of their own, special obligations. The Baptisms recorded in the New Testament were a formal and visible obedience to a definite command of Christ at the institution of the New Covenant. They were therefore a memorial of the Covenant, an acknowledgment of the obligation involved in it, and a confession of faith in its promises. And each administration of Baptism was a fulfilment of a condition of the Covenant. Therefore, when accompanied by faith, it was in the highest sense an entrance into the Covenant of God.

## *SECTION II.*

### *THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS.*

With the foregoing exposition of Holy Scripture, the practice of modern Christendom seems at first sight to be strangely at variance. Except in the Baptist Churches, a small minority of the Universal Church, Baptism as a mode of confessing faith in Christ is practically superseded in Christian countries by the administration of the rite to infants, who from their age are incapable of confession or of faith. This remarkable feature of modern Church life as compared with the Apostolic Churches demands now our best attention.

It must be at once admitted that the New Testament contains no clear proof that infants were baptized in the days of the Apostles. It is true that St. Paul baptized the houses of Stephanas and of Lydia, and the Philippian Gaoler and all who belonged to him: 1 Corinthians i. 16, Acts xvi. 15, 33. But this mention of baptized households by no means proves or suggests that he baptized infants. For a courtier from Capernaum and Crispus at Corinth believed with their entire households: John iv. 54, Acts xviii. 18. So apparently did the Gaoler: Acts xvi. 34. Cornelius feared God with all his house: ch. x. 2. And the household of Stephanas was a firstfruit of Achaia: 1 Corinthians xvi. 15. This does not mean that in these five families there were no infants, or that the infants believed; but that all capable of

understanding the Gospel believed it. Just so in reference to Baptism. The early readers of the Book of Acts and of St. Paul's Epistles knew whether it was usual to baptize infants. If it was, they would infer that, if in these three families there were infants, St. Paul baptized them. If it was not, they would interpret these words to mean that he baptized all who were of suitable age. From these passages, therefore, we can draw no inference whether or not infants were baptized in the Apostolic Churches. And we have no clearer references in the New Testament.

In my Commentary on the passage I have endeavoured to show that 1 Corinthians vii. 14 affords no evidence whether infants were or were not baptized in the Apostolic Churches.

It must also be admitted that in one important point the Baptism of an infant differs from that of a believer. In Baptism, an infant is absolutely passive; whereas a believer is himself the most conspicuous actor. So great is this difference that two of the most important assertions about Baptism in the New Testament are altogether inapplicable to the Baptism of infants. Certainly, even though *baptized for Christ*, they have not so *put on Christ* as to be in Him *sons of God through faith*: Galatians iii. 26. For, to say that infants have faith, is to make St. Paul's words meaningless. Nor have infants been raised with Christ *through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead*: Colossians ii. 12. Moreover, to speak of Baptism as a means of salvation, as was implied in the words of Ananias quoted in Acts xxii. 16, is to introduce,

if applied to infants, as I shall show in Section iii., an element utterly opposed to the spirit of the New Testament.

In spite of all this, the practice of baptizing infants was apparently universal and undisputed in the former part of the third century. CYPRIAN, bishop of Carthage, who was martyred in A.D. 258, in Epistle 58 (Oxford ed. Ep. 64) speaks of a council in which it was discussed whether infants should be baptized earlier than the eighth day, the age prescribed for circumcision, and says that the council unanimously agreed that Baptism need not be deferred to that day. This unanimity in a small detail proves clearly that about the general question of baptizing infants there was in the province of North Africa no doubt whatever. ORIGEN, who lived in Egypt and Palestine and died about A.D. 253, says in his *Homilies on Leviticus* viii. 3 that "by the practice of the Church, Baptism is given to little ones;" and again in his *Homilies on Luke* xiv., "because by Baptism the impurities of birth are laid aside, for this reason also little ones are baptized." In his *Commentary on Romans* bk. v. 9, we read that "the Church has received a tradition from the Apostles that Baptism be given to little ones." These works exist only in Latin translations. But their united testimony may be accepted with confidence as expressing the opinion of Origen. The earliest definite mention of the Baptism of Infants is at the close of the second century by Tertullian at Carthage: *On Baptism* ch. 18.* He opposes the practice, not on

* See Appendix.

the ground of novelty or as inconsistent with the essence of the rite, but simply on the ground of expediency. Possibly, the Baptism of infants is referred to somewhat earlier than this by Irenæus: *On Heresies* bk. ii. 22. 4.* But the reference is not clear. The complete confidence of Cyprian and Origen, in places so far removed as Carthage and Palestine, and the argument of Tertullian, prove decisively that the practice must have been prevalent at the close of the second century.

The scanty remains of Christian literature earlier than Irenæus contain references only to the Baptism of believers. So in Justin's First Apology (ch. 61) we read, about converts: "then they are led by us where there is water, and are born again in the way in which we ourselves were born again." Justin then quotes John iii. 3 as referring to Baptism. This language, strange as it sounds to us, and liable as it undoubtedly is to serious misinterpretation, is explained by the exposition in my last paper. The rite itself was easily confused with the New Birth, of which, as we saw, it was a divinely-ordained condition.

In view of this conflicting evidence, what shall be our judgment about the Baptism of infants? Some will say that the practice of the overwhelming majority of the Churches of Christ in all lands and all ages ought to determine our own conduct; and that the manifest blessing of God resting equally during long centuries and to-day upon those who baptize infants and those who baptize only believers disproves utterly the suggestion

* See Appendix.

that the former are neglecting, and only the latter are duly observing, the ordinance of Christ. This argument, which is by no means without force, I cannot accept as decisive. For the many complications of the Christian life make the apparent favour of God a very uncertain standard of the truth of the doctrines believed by those on whom He smiles. In another paper I shall be compelled to reject a doctrine accepted for ages by an almost unanimous consent of the Churches of Christ. At the same time, both in doctrine and ritual, a general consent of Christian belief always demands respectful attention. It will, I believe, be found that widely accepted doctrines and practices contain almost always important elements of truth, even though possibly these may be obscured by serious errors.

Others tell us that in the matter of Baptism we have nothing to do with the practice and belief of later ages; that, inasmuch as the Baptism of infants supersedes to a large extent, where adopted, the Baptism of believers, the only form of the rite described in the New Testament, and thus modifies the ordinance of Christ, we are bound to reject it and to baptize only believers.

This decision I cannot accept. Even a doctrine is not disproved by the absence of explicit statement in the Bible. We ask whether it is a fair and logical inference from other doctrines plainly stated there; or, if not, whether it contradicts the teaching of Holy Scripture? And according to the answers to these questions we accept or reject it; or if, through lack of evidence, decisive answers fail us, we suspend our judgment. So with

forms of worship. We must ask, not merely whether they are prescribed in the New Testament, but whether they are in harmony with, or contradict, the spirit of the Gospel.

It would be easy to retort on our Baptist brethren that we have no instance in the New Testament of a Church committed to the charge of a single pastor, as are almost all the Baptist Churches. Indeed it is not too much to say that the single pastorate is altogether alien to the spirit and practice of the Apostolic Church. We have no trace of it in the New Testament. For we have no hint that the work committed to Timothy (1 Timothy i. 3) and to Titus (Titus i. 5) was permanent. But our brethren may fairly say that the single pastorate is a legitimate modification of the Church Order described in the New Testament. It contradicts no command of Christ. During long years it has suited and supplied the needs of the Baptist Churches, and works well for them to-day. Therefore, although not prescribed in the New Testament, they accept and retain it as a legitimate development of Church life, a development in harmony with their history and circumstances.

How serious is the danger of rejecting an ordinance as not divine because it is not explicitly taught in the Bible, will appear at the close of this section. The New Covenant is a life, not a prescription. And we have no proof that the Christian life assumed at once all the outward forms needful for its full development. Nor have we proof that all its early forms were designed to continue unmodified to the end of time. For these reasons we

cannot ignore the Christianity of eighteen centuries and begin to re-erect the Church, taking the New Testament as a working plan.

I shall endeavour to show that the Baptism of infants rightly understood and practised is a modification of the Baptism of believers described in the New Testament, a modification retaining unimpaired all the significance and benefit of the original rite and embodying in the best form a truth of the highest importance; that this modification is supported by the analogy of a similar modification expressly ordained by God in the Old Covenant and embodying the same important truth, a truth common to both Covenants; that this truth is so important that to refuse the modification would make the New Covenant seriously defective in this point as compared with the Old; and that the Baptism of infants, though not expressly commanded in the New Testament, is in full accord with everything there. I shall suggest an explanation of the absence of an express command to baptize infants; and shall endeavour to show that refusal to baptize them because we have no such express command would, by inevitable logical inference, overturn an all-important Christian ordinance highly prized by almost all who refuse Baptism to infants. In the combined force of these various proofs, I hope to find a clear indication that in baptizing infants the Universal Church has followed the guidance of the Spirit of the Truth and has correctly interpreted the mind of Christ.

In order to appreciate the significance of Baptism, we shall do well to conceive ourselves present at the adminis-

tration of the rite in each form. And we shall best reproduce the circumstances of the Apostolic Churches by conceiving ourselves present on the mission-field, first at the Baptism of a Hindoo convert and then at that of his infant child.

At the Baptism of the father, our one absorbing thought is that by that act the baptizéd one has definitely and formally broken away from the heathenism of his early days and has joined the company of the professed servants of Christ. At the Baptism of the infant, the baptized one does nothing whatever. He is the one person present who is utterly unconscious of the solemnity of the occasion. Yet the solemnity is as great as before. We thought then of a brave man's personal decision: we think now of the infinite spiritual advantages derived from that decision by the brave man's child, with earnest prayer that in due time he may follow in his father's steps. So far then, although each rite is most solemn, the significance of the rites is different.

Is there then nothing in common between them? Yes. In each case there has been an application of water; not by the baptized one, but by a representative of the Church of Christ. Thus each rite teaches that God has come near to man in order to draw man to Himself; and that God requires, and Himself waits to impart, a purity beyond man's own attainment. Had not God done this, and had not the Gospel of the New Covenant been proclaimed in India, neither father nor child had been baptized. In other words, in the Baptism of an infant we have in full force the primary significance of the

sacrament as a visible monument of the Covenant: the secondary significance as a mode of confessing Christ, and thus appropriating the benefits of the Covenant, is apparently lost. This lost element we seek, and shall find.

A third scene is now before us. The infant has become a boy, and approaches manhood. Taught by his father, he bows to Christ, and to-day he is formally received into the Church. He now occupies a relation to God, to the New Covenant, and to the Church precisely the same as that entered by his father at Baptism. He belongs now to the company of the professed servants of Christ, and claims all the blessings of the New Covenant. The only difference is that, whereas the father's Baptism took place at his confession of faith, the son's Baptism took place in infancy. In other words, the modification involved in Infant Baptism is the erection of the monument of the Covenant years earlier than the appropriation of its blessings by personal faith and confession. It is evident at once that this earlier erection of the monument of the Covenant involves no spiritual loss. For the element lacking in the Baptism of the Infant is found in the subsequent confession of the baptized one.

This modification is supported by an important analogy in the Old Covenant. The circumcision of Isaac differs from that of Abraham as much as did the Baptism of the Hindoo's infant from his own Baptism. Just as St. Paul's statements cannot possibly be applied to the Baptism of Infants, so we cannot apply to the circumcision of Isaac the Apostle's words in Romans iv. 11 about the circumcision

of Abraham, viz., that it was *a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while in uncircumcision.* In each case this inapplicability reveals the great difference between the two forms of the same rite.

Why then was Isaac circumcised? If the rite was to Abraham a seal of personal faith, why not let Isaac wait till he is old enough to exercise similar faith? For, certainly, the faith of the father cannot save the child. If Isaac is to stand in his father's relation to God he must himself walk in his father's steps. Reasonable as our questions seem, they are silenced by God's command that Isaac and all infant sons of circumcised fathers receive the sacred rite.

The reason of this command is not far to seek. By his birth in the family of the Father of the Faithful, Isaac was placed, before his personal action began, in a relation to God very different from that of the uncircumcised children around, a position of greater privilege and responsibility. And by the standard of this higher privilege Isaac must be judged. So great and solemn is the responsibility resting in all ages upon the children of godly parents that we do not wonder at its formal recognition and embodiment, by the express command of God, in the circumcision of infants.

We have now found in the rite of circumcision the great difference noted above between the Baptism of a believer and that of an infant. Very different were Isaac's thoughts about his own circumcision from those of Abraham about his. To the latter, the rite recalled the promise of God, the struggle and victory of his own faith,

and the Covenant with God in the day he believed the great promise. To Isaac the rite recalled the privilege and responsibility of being a son of such a father.

Here then we have a modification similar to the modification involved in Infant Baptism. In each case, the second rite can be understood only in the light of the first. In each case, the primary significance of the rite, as expounded by God at the institution of Circumcision, is retained unimpaired. In each case, the modification was rendered needful by the different relation of father and infant to the Covenant with God. And in each case, it embodies important truth.

Now the relation of children to the God of their fathers is an important element common to the two Covenants. And its embodiment in the visible monument of the Covenant is as important in the one case as the other. In the Baptism of Infants it is suitably recognised. If it be not thus recognised, the New Covenant is in this important point defective as compared with the Old. And this defect would be very conspicuous and unaccountable to thoughtful Jewish converts to Christianity. Indeed it would be a strong argument for retaining in the Church of Christ, even among Gentiles, the rite of circumcision.

Together with this similarity of the Covenants, it is right to notice a difference. The Old Covenant was primarily national, and personal only by inference: the New Covenant is the reverse. Consequently, whereas Christ required from each believer in each generation formal confession of faith, no such formal confession was required under the Old Covenant from those circumcised

in infancy. But this difference does not affect the similarity just noted. We have abundant proof that in each Covenant the personal favour of God was obtained by personal faith and obedience.

It has been suggested that the defect mentioned above might be supplied by a special dedicatory rite for infants, Baptism being retained for believers. A sufficient answer to this suggestion is that such attempts have hitherto, with few exceptions, always failed through lack of authority. Moreover, the relation of the children of Christian parents to the New Covenant, a relation more important than life itself, can be satisfactorily set forth only by erection in infancy of the monument of the Covenant, in token that, apart from his own action or choice, the child is placed by his birth under its solemn responsibilities.

In the light of all this, we will listen again to the words of Christ at the institution of the Sacrament of Baptism. He bade the Apostles *make-disciples of all the nations*, i.e., to bring them as pupils into His school. He also bade them, while doing this, to *baptize* the nations and to *teach* them whatever He had commanded. Here are three transitive verbs with the same accusative case. To *make-disciples*, is placed first, and in the imperative mood, as being the one great and pressing work laid upon the Apostles: compare 1 Corinthians i. 17. How nobly it was undertaken, we learn from the Book of Acts. To *teach* the commands of Christ, was possible, for adults, only to those willing to become His disciples. But in our day this commission is performed by every Sunday-school teacher who teaches the words of Jesus to the little ones

around him, even though they be not yet avowed servants of Christ. The charge to *baptize* all the nations could be obeyed by the Apostles, in the case of adults, only in those willing to become His disciples. But the infant children of Christians are under their parents' control. There is therefore nothing to prevent their Baptism. And there is nothing in the words of Christ to forbid it. Nor is there in Mark xvi. 16. For Christ is speaking of those to whom the Apostles would *preach the Gospel.* And, to them, the only way of salvation was through the waters of Baptism. Now we have seen that administration of the rite in infancy involves no loss, and confers great spiritual gain. This gain is to us a sufficient indication of the will of Christ. We therefore bring our little ones to the sacred rite, believing that by so doing we are obeying His command in the form He would most approve.

Some will ask, If this is the mind of Christ, why is it not plainly stated in the New Testament? We can only suggest one or two explanations. It was needful to concentrate attention, at the tremendous crisis caused by the departure of Christ, upon the one work of gaining new converts. We can conceive that, in order to give great prominence to this, Baptism was at first administered only as a badge of personal confession. Moreover, as already said, the Gospel is a life developing outward forms from its own inward activity, not a legal prescription. Be this as it may, the force of this question as an objection is completely met by considering the credentials of another institution of Christianity.

We have no hint in the New Testament that the first

day of the week is to take the place of the seventh as the divinely ordained weekly rest. That it is called the Lord's Day, by no means proves this; nor do the other scanty references. Yet we keep the first day of the week as a sacred rest in perfect confidence that we are both doing the will of Christ and obeying the Fourth Commandment. Why is this? Because the great and manifest benefits of the weekly rest assure us that the words spoken at Sinai were designed for all ages and all nations; because the change from the seventh day to the first leaves these benefits unimpaired, and embodies an important principle, viz., the change of Covenant; and because Christ paid to the first day a silent honour greater than was ever paid to the seventh day. Taken by themselves, these reasons would hardly remove doubt. Viewed in the light of the practice of the Church in all countries and during long ages, they produce complete conviction. In other words, we accept with perfect confidence from the Bible read in the light of the practice of the early Church that which we could not receive with like confidence from the Bible alone.

It is worthy of note that in America, the fertile hotbed of ecclesiastical curiosities, there are some who carry their rejection of Infant Baptism to the logical result of returning to Saturday as the weekly rest. In view of their folly, let us beware lest, by clinging to the letter of Holy Scripture, we destroy its spirit.

Christ's reception of little ones, although it has no express reference to Baptism, cannot here be passed over in silence. For that so apparently trifling an act

was recorded in each of the synoptist Gospels, in Matthew xix. 13-15, Mark x. 13-16, Luke xviii. 15-17, reveals its spiritual significance. By bringing their infants, these Jewish parents testified their faith that all human life from its early beginning was an object of care to Christ, that children were included in the purpose of mercy He came to accomplish, and stand in a definite relation to the New Covenant. By receiving and blessing their little ones, Christ accepted and rewarded their faith. The same faith and the same truth find expression in the rite of Infant Baptism. In thus bringing our little ones to Christ we do but imitate an action which He permitted and defended.

To sum up. We baptize because Christ bade His Apostles, while commissioning them to bring all the nations as learners into His school, to baptize them. This command we can obey, in the case of adults, only when they are willing to accept the teaching and rule of Christ. But infants are under the control of their parents. We baptize the infant children of Christian parents as being the best way known to us of obeying the command of Christ. In each case Baptism is an outward and visible sign of the New Covenant. The Baptism of infants sets forth also the great truth that God claims, and smiles upon, human life from its earliest dawn. This great truth was set forth, under the Old Covenant, by the circumcision of infants. Therefore, in the absence of any intimation to the contrary, we administer the corresponding Christian rite in such a way as to embody it. And, in so doing, we do but

follow the practice of a vast majority of the Churches of Christ in all ages since the early dawn of Church history. Moreover, all arguments against the Baptism of Infants involve a principle which would overturn the polity of the Baptist Churches. For the best that can be said for a solitary pastorate is that it is a legitimate modification of the altogether different Church-polity described in the New Testament. The same principle would completely cut off the Christian Day of Rest from the weekly rest prescribed at Sinai. For the change of day is in no way commanded in Holy Scripture. In view of all this, none shall forbid us to bring our little ones to the sacred rite, thus presenting them to God as like ourselves needing a purity which only He can give, "nothing doubting that He favourably alloweth this godly work of ours in bringing this child to His holy Baptism."

NOTE.—From the Jewish Gemara, not earlier than the second century after Christ, we learn that converts from heathenism to Judaism were not only circumcised but baptized. Of this there is apparently no mention in any earlier writings. But the hostility between Jews and Christians makes it unlikely that after Christian Baptism had become common a similar rite would be adopted by the Jews. On the other hand, the bathing of proselytes was in complete harmony with the principles of the Law of Moses. It is therefore more probable than not that this undoubted Jewish practice was as early as the days of Christ. Usually, though apparently not always, the young children of such converts were also baptized, as undoubtedly their boys were circumcised. This proselyte Baptism, if then practised, would naturally suggest the Baptism of the young children of converts to Christianity. But we note that only children born before their fathers' conversion received this Jewish Baptism. This difference from Christian Baptism, and the uncertainty about the date of its origin, make the Baptism of proselytes an uncertain basis for

argument. Indisputably, the circumcision of the young children of Jewish proselytes would raise a question about the position of the children of converts to Christianity. If proselyte Baptism were then practised, it would make this question still more urgent. And to this question the Christian Baptism of Infants is both the logical and the historical answer.

## *SECTION III.*

### *BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.*

We come now to consider a doctrine accepted with general consent in the Ancient Church from the third century onwards, accepted now by the Roman Catholic Church, and asserted in the formularies of the Anglican Church; the doctrine commonly known as Baptismal Regeneration.

As convenient examples of this doctrine, I shall quote first an early Christian writer and then the Anglican Prayer Book.

Augustine, in his treatise on *Rebuke and Grace*, ch. 18, says: "God makes to be strangers to His kingdom, whither He sends their parents, some of the sons of His friends, i.e., of regenerated and good believers, who go forth hence in childhood without Baptism; for whom He, in whose power are all things, might, if He would, procure the grace of this font." We have similar teaching in *Grace and Freewill*, ch. 44; in *Predestination of the*

*Saints*, ch. 24; and in *The Gift of Perseverance*, ch. 21. Augustine teaches clearly that baptized infants dying in infancy are saved, and that infants not baptized are lost. Such teaching, few will now maintain. That it was once generally and confidently believed, warns us that general consent is no sure test of truth.

As a concise and clear statement of the doctrine I am about to discuss, I shall quote the Catechism contained in the Anglican Prayer Book. The candidate for confirmation is there taught that in Baptism, which in nearly every case was administered in infancy, he "was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." In other words, the Anglican Church declares that infants stand, after their Baptism, in a relation to Christ, to God, and to the kingdom of heaven, which was not theirs before the rite was administered.

In harmony with this teaching, in the order for the *Public Baptism of Infants*, thanks are given to God that He has been "pleased to regenerate this infant with" His "Holy Spirit." This doctrine cannot, however, be fairly deduced from the *Articles of Religion*. But it is not contradicted in any part of the Prayer Book.

It is right to say that an eminent Anglican, Dr. Mozley, in a very able and impartial work on *The Baptismal Controversy*, Part ii., chaps. 2 and 3, endeavours to show that the above statements, although literal in form, have not necessarily a literal meaning; and that they are to be taken in a hypothetical sense and as a charitable supposition. A hypothetical assertion is one which claims to be true, not always, but sometimes, not absolutely, but only under

certain conditions. Unfortunately, Dr. Mozley does not tell us the conditions on which the assertions of the Catechism are true of baptized infants. He suggests that these assertions are not inconsistent with the teaching of Calvin that all persons are predestined by God, some to eternal life, others to death. If this teaching be admitted, the charitable supposition would be that the baptized infant is one of the elect; and the assertions of the Prayer Book would be that elect infants are placed by their Baptism in a new relation to God, and that in Baptism the Holy Spirit works in them the change described as Regeneration. Be this as it may, the Anglican Catechism asserts plainly that, either always or sometimes, infants are placed by their Baptism in a new relation to Christ, to God, and to the kingdom of heaven. To deny to the words before us this meaning, is to destroy all definiteness of human language.

F. W. Robertson says (Sermon 4, Second Series) that "Baptism makes a child of God in the sense in which coronation makes a king." But no one would say that on his coronation day he was made king. The reign begins, and is always reckoned, not from coronation but from accession. Not a few kings whom all acknowledge to be such were never crowned. But whatever may be the case with crowned kings the words of the Anglican Catechism evidently mean that before the rite the baptized one was not, and in the rite became, a child of God.

We now seek the meaning of the three phrases by which the Catechism describes the new state entered at Baptism.

The second term, *child of God*, and an equivalent term, *son of God*, are frequent in the New Testament, almost always in one definite sense, and always in senses closely allied. And, because of its frequency there in this one definite sense, it must be understood in the Catechism in the same sense, unless we have plain indication to the contrary. Certainly it will be so understood by the mass of those who use the Catechism. The meaning of this phrase in the New Testament is open to no doubt. St. Paul teaches in Rom. viii. 14, that *so many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God*, and that his readers *have received the Spirit of Adoption* (or *son-making*), that in Him they *cry Abba, Father*, and that *the Spirit Himself bears witness with their spirit that* they *are children of God*. The Apostle adds that *if* they are *children*, they are *also heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*. In Galatians iii. 26, he teaches that his readers are *sons of God through faith*, inasmuch as *so many of them as have been baptized for Christ have put on Christ*. Not essentially different is the sense of the same phrase in Matthew v. 9, *The peacemakers . . . shall be called sons of God;* and in verse 45, *that ye may become sons of your Father in Heaven*. Throughout the New Testament the *sons* or *children of God* are persons who occupy a relation to God not shared by the wicked or the unbelieving. So especially 1 John iii. 10: *In this are manifest the children of God and the children of the Devil*. In Acts xvii. 28, when speaking of the relation of the human race to God, St. Paul avoids the phrases before us, and quotes the words of a Greek poet: *For we are His offspring*. He avoids them

even when expounding this quotation: *Being then an offspring of God.* The only exception to the statement above is the prodigal son: Luke xv. 24. But we cannot conceive that he became his father's son by any such rite as Infant Baptism.

In harmony with the above, we learn from 1 Peter i. 3, 23 that the readers have been *begotten* or *born again.* And from 1 John v. 1, 4 we learn that all who believe *that Jesus is the Christ have been born of God,* and that all such *overcome the world.* They do not and cannot sin: 1 John iii. 6, 9.

The phrase, *member of Christ,* recalls St. Paul's teaching that the Church is the Body of Christ, and that his readers are members of that Body: so 1 Cor. xii. 27, *Ye are the body of Christ and severally members thereof.* Now the writers of the New Testament always assume that all Church-members are already justified by personal faith and are by faith adopted into the family of God. Of this, some clear proofs have just been given; and many others equally clear might be added. This assumption by no means implies that there were in the Apostolic Churches no false members. But these were left out of sight. The writers charitably assume that all Church-members are what they profess to be, viz., by personal faith members of the family of God, members of the living Body of which Christ is the Head, and in virtue of their relation to God, sharers of the inheritance belonging to Christ and to those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren.

Here then we find in the New Testament the three

phrases used in the Anglican Catechism. And we find that both in the New Testament and in the Catechism the three terms are synonymous. This careful and double repetition proves clearly that the sense which these phrases in the Catechism are intended to convey is the sense conveyed by them in the New Testament, at least so far as the same sense can be understood of believers and of infants. In other words, the Anglican Church teaches that in Baptism infants are placed in living union with Christ, are received into the number of God's adopted children, and obtain a right to a share in the heritage of the brethren of Christ.

This plain teaching of her formularies is accepted and defended by not a few writers of the Anglican Church. As a good example of such writers I may refer to two very popular and able works, *Church Doctrine—Bible Truth* and *The Second Adam and the New Birth*, both by M. F. Sadler. While rejecting as untrue and very dangerous much of the teaching of these attractive volumes, I cheerfully recognise their Christian tone and uniform fairness. With respectful attention we ask Mr. Sadler for proof of this remarkable doctrine so different from the general tenor of the New Testament. We may fairly demand clear evidence that it was taught either by Christ or by His Apostles.

In chapter iv. of his work on *The Second Adam*, Mr. Sadler endeavours to prove that infants are "the proper recipients" of the Sacrament of Baptism. This I have already myself attempted to prove. But the argument of Mr. Sadler seems to me most unsatisfactory. Possibly

the defectiveness of this proof attracts less attention because almost all his readers have already accepted his conclusion.

The title of chapter vi. asserts that "the Apostles hold all baptized Christians to be members of Christ." This is proved by many quotations from the Epistles of St. Paul, St. John, and St. Peter. These proofs, with certain small exceptions, I heartily endorse. Undoubtedly the Apostles assume that their readers are members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. They assume also, as Mr. Sadler properly shows, that their readers entered this state of blessed privilege through the gate of Baptism.

Mr. Sadler then goes on to assume silently that whatever is said in the New Testament about Baptism and baptized persons is true also of baptized infants. He assumes this in complete unconsciousness of the absolute difference between a Baptism which is a personal confession of faith and another Baptism in which the baptized one does nothing whatever. This oversight vitiates his entire argument. For the difference between the two rites which Mr. Sadler confounds is fundamental. To teach that to a heathen or a Jew Baptism is the only way into the blessings of the New Covenant, is in complete accord with the broad principles of that Covenant. For faith in Christ is the one conspicuous condition of all the blessings of the Covenant, and Christ required from His servants confession of their faith and ordained Baptism as the formal mode of confession. But to teach that an infant is brought into a

new relation to God, or undergoes an inward change, by means of an outward rite of which he is utterly unconscious, is to introduce an element altogether alien to the whole tenor of the Gospel. For such teaching we must have plain proof. Certainly it is not proved, or in any way supported, by assertions of Holy Scripture about the spiritual effect of the Baptism of believers.

The teaching I now combat would break all analogy between the two Sacraments. For even the Roman Church admits that the benefits received from the Lord's Supper depend upon, and are in proportion to, the faith of the receiver. A favourite Roman Catholic argument is that just as a dead body cannot receive nutriment from bread so a lifeless soul cannot receive nourishment from the body and blood of Christ. Certainly each one comes of his own free choice to receive the sacred symbols. But the infant is carried to the font without any choice of his own, and is wholly unconscious of the rite administered. Consequently, no appeal, in proof of the doctrine before us, can be made to the nature of a sacrament as such. For the blessings derived from the only other sacrament ordained by Christ are indisputably contingent on the faith of the receiver.

The teaching I am endeavouring to disprove is far more momentous in its results than at first sight appears. If blessings wrought by the Spirit of God follow Baptism as such, they do so by whomsoever the rite is administered, even though in an utterly frivolous spirit, or by a wicked man. For if the validity of Baptism depends on the devoutness or the character of the person baptizing, the

infant baptized cannot in future years use with any confidence the language put into his lips by the Catechism. It follows then from the teaching before us that the waving of the dripping hand of a thoughtless or bad man works invariably, if a certain ritual be followed, in an unconscious infant an actual spiritual change and places that infant in a new relation to Christ, to God, and to the kingdom of heaven. This is salvation, not by faith, but by leger-demain.

It is true that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were sometimes offered, under God's appointment, by bad priests. But we are never taught that these sacrifices were channels of direct spiritual blessing in the sense asserted by the Anglican Catechism about the rite of Infant Baptism. Moreover, God made Himself in some sense responsible for this abuse by ordaining, in the preparatory and imperfect Covenant, that Aaron's sons, without reference to their character, and they only, should perform the rites of the Tabernacle. But we have no such express ordinance in the New Covenant. The doctrine before us, like the errors in Galatia, tends to bring down the New Covenant with its greater blessings to the level of the Old.

Nor is this all. If the hands of the man who performs the rite of Baptism convey, by their simple movement, spiritual blessing so great, we naturally ask, Whose are the hands to which this mysterious power is given? It is true that even the Roman Church admits as valid in cases of necessity Baptism by a lay-man or by a woman. But such cases are evidently exceptional. The power to

distribute the gift of eternal life cannot be universal. It must be derived from a competent authority. At once come in questions of ecclesiastical pedigree. And these raise questionings about the right of the Anglican Church in the sixteenth century to rebel, under compulsion of Henry and Elizabeth, against an ecclesiastical authority which it had long recognised and which traces its descent from the Apostles of Christ. No wonder that many, claiming this mysterious prerogative, have felt bound in consistency themselves to bow to the authority of the Church of Rome. An old teacher once said (Galatians v. 3) very earnestly to some Gentiles who were on the eve of accepting the rite of circumcision that they were thereby binding themselves to keep the whole Mosaic Law. And I am compelled mournfully to believe that they who teach that any spiritual blessing, be it an inward work of the Holy Spirit or a changed relation to God, follows invariably the administration of Baptism to an unconscious infant, are unwittingly rivetting the fetters of spiritual bondage.

The above protest by no means implies that no spiritual blessing to the infant accompanies Baptism. Far be it from me to attempt to limit the mercy of God towards a little one presented to Him by the believing hands of loving parents, hands held up by the faith and prayer of the people of God. For, to give blessing to one person in answer to the believing prayer of others, is in complete harmony with principles underlying the whole administration of the kingdom of God. My protest is directed only against the teaching that spiritual blessing follows invari-

ably the performance of an outward rite, teaching which I have shown to be involved in the formulary quoted.

One thing all will admit. For teaching so remarkable, so unlike everything else in the New Covenant, and involving results so serious, we may fairly claim plain proof. What is the proof adduced? Simply the teaching of the New Testament about the Baptism of Believers. In order to prove that certain blessings are conveyed by Baptism to an unconscious infant, we are reminded that in the New Testament similar blessings are said to be obtained by faith, that Christ required this faith to be confessed by reception of the rite of Baptism, and that consequently Baptism is in a few places spoken of as a condition or means of salvation. Surely never was a great and unstable and dangerous structure erected on so untrustworthy a foundation. That this doctrine receives no support from the analogy of the Lord's Supper, I have already shown. There is not one word in the New Testament which even suggests in the slightest degree that spiritual blessings are, or may be, conveyed to an infant by a rite of which he is utterly unconscious. And the suggestion contradicts the broad principles underlying the kingdom of God.

The only appeal remaining is to the general consent of the Churches in the third century. But this I cannot, in so serious a matter, accept as decisive. For I have no proof that the Churches, even when unanimous, were infallible. Moreover, to receive their judgment as decisive, would compel me to admit other doctrines against which my intellectual and moral and spiritual nature

revolts. I have no reliable witnesses of the teaching of Christ and His Apostles except the Books of the New Testament. And these I find sufficient to remove all doubt in all matters of importance.

In a recent work on *Regeneration in Baptism*, by G. E. O'Brien, we are told on page 160, about infants who die unbaptized, "So far as we can judge from the teaching of the Revealed Word of God, we must regard them as lost. Yet, O God, have mercy on their poor little souls, for Jesus' sake! . . . As, therefore, in cases of wilful neglect the parent must blame himself for the starvation of his child's body; under similar circumstances he must blame himself, and not God, for the loss of his child's soul." In other words, Mr. O'Brien follows, timidly and at a distance, in the light of the nineteenth century, the terrible teaching of Augustine quoted above. Let us take warning from this extreme case.

The results attained in this section are only negative. The prevalence and prestige of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration made disproof of it needful before any attempt to build up positive truth. The real significance and benefit of the Baptism of Infants will be discussed in the next section.

## *SECTION IV.*

### *THE SIGNIFICANCE AND BENEFIT OF THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS.*

The absence of any express reference in the New Testament compels us to seek for the significance of Infant Baptism in the broad principles of the New Covenant viewed in the light of all that we know about the spiritual position of the children of Christian parents. To this source of information we turn with the more confidence because we saw in Section i. that the whole teaching of the New Testament about the Baptism of Believers is a logical development of the principles of the New Covenant in the light of Christ's original commission to baptize. In other words, the Baptism of Believers does not stand alone, but is an organic outgrowth of the essential principles of the New Covenant. Such must also be the Baptism of Infants.

Just as in the Gospel Revealed Truth is presented to the mind in audible words, so in the two Christian Sacraments and in the ritual of the Old Covenant Truth is presented to the mind in visible symbols. Very important is this double presentation. The Word explains the Symbol: the Symbol, which is more easily preserved than is abstract teaching, calls attention to the explanatory Word. Each of the two Sacraments embodies the historic fact that God has come near to man and has entered into Covenant

with him. The Lord's Supper teaches in silent eloquence that this Covenant rests mysteriously upon the blood and death of Christ. Baptism teaches that in the Covenant God requires and imparts a purity beyond man's own reach. The Baptism of Infants teaches that even the innocence of childhood needs purification at the hands of God, that the children of Christian parents are from their earliest days encompassed by the New Covenant, and that, whatever their future action or choice may be, they will be treated by God on the principles of the Covenant. In other words, Christ claims our little ones for His own: and from that claim their subsequent action, be it what it may, cannot release them.

We now see that the children of Christian parents stand in a very definite and solemn relation to the New Covenant. This relation involves a threefold responsibility resting upon baptized children, upon the parents who brought them to Baptism, and upon the Church and the pastor who administered the sacred rite. If then Baptism be a monument of the Covenant, it must be a monument of this threefold responsibility.

Each administration of Infant Baptism reminds us that, before we were born, for us had been shed the blood of the Covenant; that around our opening intelligence shone the light of the Gospel, which must be to us either the Light of Life or a consuming fire; and that from loving lips in early days we heard the story of the cross, which must be to us either an eternal song or eternal shame. Far different our lot, had we been born in the darkness of heathendom. This difference with its tremendous

responsibilities, the Sacrament we are considering sets before the eyes of all those present.

Even where parental influence is defective or bad, this defect does not destroy the responsibility just mentioned. For the Gospel exerts a mighty influence even beyond the immediate surroundings of those loyal to Christ. Certainly all children taken to Christian worship or instruction hear the words of Christ. And in proportion to the influences thus brought to bear upon them is their responsibility.

The Baptism of Infants also embodies a responsibility resting upon their parents. The constant intercourse at home, the dependence of the child upon his parents for the necessaries and the comforts of life, and the love evoked by parental care, give to parents an influence altogether unique, and a unique opportunity of leading their little ones to bow to Christ. To use to the uttermost this opportunity, every Christian parent is bound by his loyalty to Christ, by his love to his children, and by the solemn responsibilities resting upon them. Indeed we cannot doubt that the training of children to serve the God of their fathers was one chief aim of the institution by the Creator of the relation of parents and children. The evident value of such training reveals the sacredness of family life.

Notice carefully that these responsibilities are not created, or even increased, nor is the child's relation to the New Covenant in any way altered, by Baptism. For even if the parents refused to bring their little one to the sacred rite, they would still be bound, under an obligation most solemn, to use all their powers to win him for Christ,

and the child would in subsequent years be bound, with an obligation proportionate to his religious advantages, to accept Christ. By his birth under Christian influences he is already one of *the sons of the Covenant*: Acts iii. 25.

A similar, though less, responsibility rests upon the Church to which the parents belong, and especially on Christian pastors. The susceptibility of childhood affords an opportunity, soon to pass away, of winning children for Christ. And this opportunity creates a corresponding responsibility. Every Church and every pastor, and in some measure every Christian man and woman, is bound to do all he can to bring to Christ all the children within reach of his influence.

In this case we notice that when parents bring an infant to Baptism they thus claim for him in due time religious oversight by the pastor and a share of the religious advantages afforded by the Church. This opens to the pastor and to the Church an opportunity of doing good to the child, and thus lays upon them increased responsibility. Children brought to us in infancy have thus a special claim upon our best attention.

Such then is the significance of the Baptism of Infants. It is an embodiment in symbolic form of the New Covenant, of the infant's relation to it, and of the various responsibilities involved in that relation. And the embodiment is the most suitable we can conceive. No one asked the unconscious infant whether he would be baptized. Nor did God ask him whether he would be born in a Christian family. Yet by the responsibilities following inevitably the surroundings of his birth he will be judged.

Unstained as he is by personal sin, he yet needs a purification which only God can give, as time will soon show. But before the innate tendencies to evil reveal themselves, this holy Sacrament declares that God has already provided the needed purification.

The benefits of the Baptism of Infants are derived from the truths therein embodied. For the presentation of truth is God's chosen means of saving men. And the benefit of the rite is in proportion to the value of the truth therein set forth. In the Gospel, the Truth operates for man's salvation through a spoken word: in the Sacraments the same truth operates through visible symbols. And in each case the Truth is the channel through which the Spirit of God breathes into man, and nourishes in him, divine life. For He is *the Spirit of the Truth:* John xiv. 17. Without His presence even the Truth is powerless and dead. But, in order to become a channel of blessing, the Truth must come into contact with man's thought, and evoke faith. It does this, by God's ordinance, through the preached and the symbolic Word, which thus become to us the hand of God. This presence of the Spirit operating through audible and visible forms is the great mystery underlying both the Gospel and the two Sacraments. In each case the abiding result depends upon the reception by faith of the truth thus presented. In the Baptism of Infants, inasmuch as the baptized one is incapable of faith, the immediate benefit is for the parents, for the pastor baptizing, and for the congregation present at the rite. But to these the truth set forth is of the highest importance. To those baptized in infancy the

spiritual blessings of the Covenant can be appropriated only by subsequent personal faith. The early administration of the rite teaches that these blessings are waiting for the child's acceptance: and that from infancy Christ claims him.

Inasmuch as the Truth is the divinely appointed channel through which the Spirit of God imparts spiritual life and nourishment, and Baptism is a divinely appointed mode of presenting the Truth, we need not hesitate to say that Baptism is not only a declaration of Truth but is also a divinely ordained channel through which God bestows spiritual blessing. But all analogy assures us that the immediate blessing is only for those who with intelligent faith embrace the Truth thus presented. Nor need the blessing be limited to the time of administration. Just as the Gospel is frequently operative long after the preacher's voice is silent, so the Sacrament of Baptism, administered in the Church at intervals, to infants or to believers, is an abiding monument of certain great Truths fruitful in blessing even when their embodiment is not actually in view.

That Baptism conveys to infants any immediate spiritual blessing, we have no proof or presumption in the New Testament. For the blessings there connected with Baptism are contingent on faith, the one condition of all the blessings of the New Covenant. And infants are incapable of faith. Moreover, that actual spiritual benefits follow invariably the administration of a sacred rite, is without analogy in the known Kingdom of God.

To sum up. In a convert to Christianity, Baptism

is a formal confession of faith in Christ in a mode specially prescribed by Him. To the baptized convert, therefore, in some sense all the blessings of salvation are results of Baptism. For without it they could not, in ordinary cases, have been His. The peculiar form of the rite is also a visible presentation of important truth, viz., that in Christ God has come near to man in order to give him a purity beyond his reach yet absolutely needful for entrance into heaven. The truth thus presented is, to those who apprehend it by faith, the chosen channel through which the Holy Spirit conveys to men spiritual nutriment and life.

By those baptized in infancy these blessings in their fulness are obtained only by subsequent faith and confession. But the rite administered in infancy proclaims to all those who have heard the Gospel that the blessings of the New Covenant, symbolized in their Baptism, are waiting for their acceptance, and that Christ claims for Himself human life from its earliest dawn. The presentation of this important truth, and the blessings it imparts to those who rightly receive it, are the immediate and inestimable benefits of Infant Baptism.

## *SECTION V.*

### *THE RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH.*

BEFORE discussing the above question we shall say a few more words about the relation of the children of godly parents to the New Covenant.

That this relation is very real and definite, we have already seen. For children brought up under Christian influences, will be saved or lost according as they accept or reject the Gospel of Christ. They are in the Covenant in the sense that they will be judged on the principles therein set forth; and thus differ greatly from many who pass through life without having heard the name of Christ, and who will therefore be judged on other principles. And we have seen that their responsibility is in proportion to their religious advantages.

But we have no reason to suppose that the rite of Baptism changes the infant's relation to the Covenant. For that relation is determined by his nearness to the Gospel of Christ. And the entire teaching of the New Testament about Baptism is valid only of those whose Baptism is a confession of personal faith. We therefore cannot doubt that the child of a pious Baptist belongs as much to Christ, and is as near to Christ, as a child presented to God in Baptism. Yet, if the argument of this treatise be correct, we may well believe that the Baptist Churches are losers through their failure rightly

to interpret the mind of the Spirit of God. Admitting this, we may affirm that Baptism does not in itself alter an infant's relation to God, but simply sets forth a most solemn relation already existing in virtue of his birth under Christian influences. The actual spiritual benefit of the rite is for those who intelligently, and with faith, apprehend its significance.

Our answer to the main question now before us depends upon our conception of the Church. This we will now consider.

The writers of the Epistles of the New Testament always assume that their readers have personal spiritual life. St. Paul declares that his readers at Corinth *have been justified*, that those at Rome have been *made free from sin*, and have *become servants to God*, that those in Galatia *are all sons of God through faith*: 1 Corinthians vi. 11, Romans vi. 22, Galatians iii. 26. Yet some of these were *babes in Christ*, and their conduct open to severe rebuke. To others St. John writes *because* their *sins are forgiven*, and says that he and they *know that* they *have passed out of death into life*: 1 John ii. 12, iii. 14; compare iii. 24, iv. 13, v. 19. This assumption implies clearly that the members of the Apostolic Churches professed to have personal and saving faith in Christ. But it does not imply that there were no false or unworthy members. Any such are left out of sight. The Apostles charitably assume that their readers are what they profess to be. But their language is inexplicable had there not been a profession of personal faith. We may therefore describe the Apostolic Churches as the company in

any one place of the professed servants of Christ, these being united, by the ordinance of Christ, for mutual protection and help in His service. And to maintain in our day this conception of the Church is of the highest importance. For the Church lives by the personal faith and life of each of its members.

Of the Church thus understood, infants cannot, in the full sense, be members. They who have not yet entered the battle of life do not occupy the position of those who have already gained a most important victory. Born as they are under the light of the Gospel, they can enter the company of the servants of Christ only through the gate of personal faith and confession. To overlook this essential difference, cannot raise the little ones: it will inevitably lower our conception of the Church. And, if it obscure the absolute need, in our children, of personal faith and confession, it will greatly injure them.

That infants do not occupy the position of professed believers, is evident also from the fact that to number them with such would make all enumeration of members meaningless. I have heard of ministers enrolling their infants as members of the Church. Were these infants counted as members? If so, here we have relief from our frequent regrets that our numbers increase so slowly, or occasionally recede. Count baptized infants, and at once we have an immense ingathering; and our numbering becomes ridiculous. Unimportant as enumeration may seem, the impossibility and absurdity of counting baptized infants as Church members proves that they are not in the full sense members of the Church. Baptism

does not place them where, in the Apostolic Churches, it placed believers.

This proof is confirmed by serious practical difficulties which surround any attempt to reckon baptized infants as Church members. Whose children are to be thus reckoned? We baptize without hesitation infant children of any parents who are accustomed to join with us in public worship, even though not themselves members of the Church. That we are right in doing so, I shall soon endeavour to show. Would it not be incongruous to give to infants, on the ground that they are children of Christian parents, a position not occupied by their parents? Or does any one seriously propose that we cease to baptize such children?

Once more. If we reckon infants as members of the Church, how long are we to retain those who in boyhood show no definite signs of spiritual life? All experience tells us that such cases will arise. At what age shall we cross out their names? At ten years? at fourteen? at eighteen? By what process are they to be removed from the register? How serious the dilemma thus needlessly forced upon the Church! Hereditary Church-membership is apt to become an eclipse of personal spiritual life.

These difficulties, which seem at first sight purely ecclesiastical, reveal the wide difference between the position of baptized infants and that of professed believers in Christ. This difference forbids us to accept the former as, in the full sense, members of the Church.

This by no means implies that infants are away from Christ. He who of old took them in His arms still holds

them in His embrace. From His embrace, armed with His blessing, they go forth into the battle of life. But victory is only for those who confess Christ. The kingdom of God and the Church are by no means conterminous. The latter includes, not necessarily all those on whom God smiles, but those only who have ranged themselves under the banner of Christ.

Moreover, the children of Christian parents and of Christian congregations and schools, although not yet members of the Church, occupy already a very close relation to it. They are an outer court separated from the inner sanctuary only by the gate of personal confession. Very soon they must either pass through that gate or wander away into the world. To-day they are within reach of our influence: in a few years it will be displaced by the distracting influences of the world around. The value and the shortness of this opportunity lay upon the Christian pastor a heavy responsibility. The outer court is as much a part of his charge as is the Church itself. He is bound to use every effort to lead the little ones, as early as possible, from the outer court into the sanctuary of personal confession.

We notice, however, that Baptism is not the gate into this outer court as was the Baptism of believers the gate into the Apostolic Churches. For they were brought into it, not by Baptism, but by the light of the Gospel which shone around their cradle. Even unbaptized children in our congregations are in this outer court as much as those baptized. Surely no one will deny that all have an equal claim on the pastor's care. His responsibility is limited

only by his influence and opportunities. We are bound to do all we can to save all within our reach, baptized or unbaptized. By baptizing infants we do not place them in the outer court, but recognise their birthright place in it. Just so circumcision did not make a babe the child of Abraham but recognised him as already such.

We saw in Section ii. that Infant Baptism lacks one all-important element present in the Baptism of a believer, viz., personal confession. We baptize infants in confident hope that in due time this lack will be supplied. The Church is therefore bound to provide for those baptized in infancy a suitable opportunity of personal and formal confession, and to keep before them the lack which only they can supply. Unless it be supplied by their own personal confession, their Baptism will remain for ever incomplete; a monument of unfaithfulness to a high vocation.

We can now give a partial answer to the question before us. Certainly, baptized infants are not, in the full sense, members of the Church. For the Church is the company of the professed followers of Christ. On the other hand, the children of Christian parents stand in a most intimate relation to the Church, in a position which gives them, equally with its full members, a claim to the pastor's care. The little ones occupy a court of their own. And, without doubt, their court belongs to the Temple. The pastor is bound to do all he can to make it to each of them a vestibule to the inner court of personal confession. If we keep all this in view it matters little whether the name *Church* is given to the outer, or only to the inner court. But

in either case we must keep in mind the claims of the little ones and their need of personal faith and confession.

Ought there then to be lists of those baptized in infancy? The baptismal register is already such a list. Possibly a column might be left to receive in due time a record that the baptized one has joined the Church. But the many migrations of modern life would make the filling up of such a column very uncertain; and render baptismal registers a very awkward basis for evangelical work among the young.

A more practicable method lies ready to our hand. Let every pastor look upon all children in his congregation and schools as a special charge for which he is responsible to Christ. For his own use, let him as far as possible obtain lists of them. Let him devise, at frequent intervals, special services for the young; and make special effort to bring to these services every child in his congregation, so that none keep away except by their own refusal. At such services, let him set forth plainly the solemn responsibilities embodied in Christian Baptism; and use every persuasion to draw the young to Christ. And let there be formed suitable classes which may be a pathway to full communion with the Church. On these lines, which are open to no question, we shall best discharge the solemn obligation recognised in our Baptism of Infants.

Whose children ought we to baptize? If Baptism admitted infants into the Church, we should hesitate to baptize children of parents not themselves members of it. Such hesitation is needless. That an infant is brought

for Baptism, proves that he is born under Christian influences, and under the privileges and responsibilities of the New Covenant. We therefore erect over him the monument of the Covenant. By bringing him, the parents recognise their obligation to train him for Christ, and give to the pastor a valuable opportunity of pressing upon them the greatness of their responsibility. But we have no right to claim that the little one be brought up in our own communion. For Baptism is a rite, not of any one Church, but of the Universal Church. At the same time, by bringing him to us, the parents claim for their little one our pastoral care. By receiving him we acknowledge the obligation thus laid upon us to do all we can to lead him to Christ and into His Church. And the best way of doing this known to us is to gather him into our own section of the Church. This therefore is our definite aim and hope for all infants whom we baptize.

To sum up. Baptism is a divinely erected monument of the New Covenant, and specifically of the truth that in Christ God requires, and waits to impart, a purity otherwise unattainable. In the case of heathens and Jews, the monument can be erected only on those who personally accept the Covenant. It is to them a mode of confession, and, as commanded by Christ, a condition, in ordinary circumstances, of salvation. But infants are under the control of their parents. And parental influence places the children of Christians in a very definite relation to the New Covenant. From their parents they will hear the Gospel: and by that Gospel they will be judged. This is

to the children an infinite privilege, and to children and parents involves solemn responsibility. Of this relation and privilege and responsibility, the Baptism of Infants is a formal recognition. The benefit of the rite is the presentation of the truths therein embodied. For these truths are a channel through which the Spirit of God imparts spiritual life. The actual gain is in proportion as the truths are apprehended by the persons present. But we have no hint that the rite alters in any way the infant's relation to God or to the Covenant, or works in him any immediate spiritual change. For the blessings connected in the New Testament with the Baptism of believers cannot be predicated of infants, who are incapable of faith, the unique condition of all the blessings of the New Covenant. We have seen that infants cannot be reckoned as members of the Church in the same full sense as are those who have entered it by personal confession; but that children under Christian influences form an outer court designed to be the pathway to the inner sanctuary of personal confession, and claiming in equal measure the care of the Christian pastor. In other words, BY THEIR BIRTH UNDER CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES, THE CHILDREN OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS ARE PLACED ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE CHURCH, IN A POSITION WHICH COMPELS THEM EITHER TO CROSS THE THRESHOLD OR TO TURN THEIR BACK UPON IT. OF THIS SOLEMN POSITION, THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS IS A FORMAL RECOGNITION.

# APPENDIX.

## REFERENCES TO BAPTISM IN EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS.

In chap. xi. of the so-called EPISTLE OF BARNABAS, a document quoted several times by Clement of Alexandria as written by the companion of St. Paul, but written probably by an unknown writer at the close of the first century, we read: "Let us inquire whether the Lord took care to make a declaration beforehand about the water and about the cross. About the water it is written touching Israel how they will not receive the baptism which bears forgiveness of sins but will build *one* up for themselves," quoting Jeremiah ii. 13. "Then what says he? 'There was a river flowing on the right, and beautiful trees were growing up from it, and whoever may eat of them will live for ever.' This means that we go down into the water full of sins and defilement, and we go up bearing fruit in our heart, having in *our* spirit fear and hope towards Christ."

In the recently discovered TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, a document of about the same age, in chap. vii., we read, "About Baptism. Thus baptize. Having said beforehand all these things, baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in fresh water. But if thou hast not fresh water, baptize in other water. And if thou canst not *baptize* in cold *water*, then *do so* in warm. And if thou hast neither, (*i.e.*, in sufficient quantity,) pour water three times on the head, for the name of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Before the Baptism let the Baptizer and the person receiving Baptism fast, and any others who can. But command the person receiving Baptism to fast one or two days."

IGNATIUS, writing at the beginning of the second century to the Smyrnans, in chap. viii. says: "It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a lovefeast."

In *the Shepherd* of HERMAS, written probably at the middle of the second century, we read in Vision iii. chap. 3: "Hear then why the

tower is built over waters; because your life was saved and will be saved by means of water. And the tower is founded upon the word of the almighty and glorious Name and is held firm by the unseen power of the Father."

So in *Commandment* iv., chap. 3: "I heard, sir, from some teachers that there is no other kind of repentance except that when we went down into the water and received forgiveness of our former sins. He says to me, Thou hast heard well: for it is so. For he who has received forgiveness of sins must needs sin no more but dwell in purity."

So in *Similitude* ix. chap. 16: "Why did the stones go up out of the deep, and were put to the building of the tower, bearing these spirits? They must of necessity go up through water in order to be made alive. For unless they laid aside the deadness of their life they could not in any other way enter into the Kingdom of God. Therefore also those who were asleep received the seal of the Son of God. For before a man bears the name of the Son of God he is dead: but when he has received the seal he puts away his deadness and receives life. The seal then is the water. They go down therefore into the water dead, and go up living. Also to those men therefore this seal was preached and they made use of it, in order that they might enter into the Kingdom of God."

About the same time JUSTIN writes in his *First Apology*, chap. lxi.: "We will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ, lest if we passed by this we should seem to be somewhat unfair in our exposition. So many as are persuaded and believe that the things taught and said by us are true, and promise to be able to live accordingly, are taught to pray and ask from God, with fasting, forgiveness of their former sins, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are led by us where there is water and are born again in the way of new birth by which also we ourselves were born again. For in the name of God, the Father and Master of all things, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing* in water. For Christ also said, 'Except ye be born again ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.' . . . And from this we have learnt from the Apostles this reason. Since we received our first birth by necessity, without knowing it, by our

* Same word in Ephesians v. 26; Titus iii. 5.

parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training, in order that we may not remain children of necessity or of ignorance but may become children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water forgiveness of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who wishes to be born again and has repented of his former sins in the name of God, the Father and Master of all things; they who lead to the laver * (or washing) him that is to be washed, saying over him this name only. . . . And this washing is called enlightenment, since they who learn these things receive light in their understanding."

So in the *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. xiv.: "What is the use of that Baptism which cleanses the flesh and body only? Baptize the soul from anger and from covetousness, from envy, from hatred; and, lo, the body is clean."

So again in chap. xliii.: "And we who through Him have approached God have received not fleshly but spiritual circumcision, which Enoch and those like him observed. And we, when we had become sinners, because of the mercy of God received it through Baptism. And in like manner all may receive it."

There are similar references to Baptism in chaps. xliv., lxxxvi.

IRENÆUS, who became Bishop of Lyons in Gaul in A.D. 178, writes *On Heresies*, bk. ii. 22. 4: "He came to save all men through Himself; all, I say, who through Him are born again for God, infants, and children, and boys, and young men, and older men. Therefore He came through every age, for infants having become an infant, sanctifying infants: among children a child, sanctifying those of that age, and at the same time becoming an example to them of piety and righteousness and subjection."

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA at the close of the second century writes, *Pedagogue*, bk. i. 6: "Being baptized, we are enlightened; being enlightened, we are adopted as sons: being adopted, we attain maturity; attaining maturity, we become immortal." And below, "So also we who receive baptism, having wiped away the sins which like a mist obscure the light of the Divine Spirit, have the eye of the spirit free and unhindered and full of light." Similar references to Baptism follow. In chap. xii. he says: "To me it seems that He Himself formed man out of dust, and begat him again with water, and made him to grow by the Spirit, and trained him by

* Same word in Ephesians v. 26; Titus iii. 5.

the word for adoption and salvation, directing him by holy commandments."

About the same time TERTULLIAN at Carthage wrote a treatise *On Baptism*, which begins: "Blessed Sacrament of our water, by which, washed from the sins of our earlier darkness, we are set free for eternal life. . . . We little fishes, like our FISH,* Jesus Christ, are born in water; nor are we safe in any other way but by remaining in water. Therefore Quintilla, the most monstrous one, (the Cainite heresy,) knew well how to kill little fishes by taking them away from the water." Tertullian assumes the necessity of Baptism for salvation. He replies in chap. xiii. to an objection thus: "They say that Baptism is not necessary for those to whom faith is sufficient; for even Abraham pleased God by a sacrament not of water but of faith. But in all cases later things decide, and those subsequent prevail over those going before. Salvation was formerly by naked faith, before the suffering and resurrection of the Lord. But now that faith has been enlarged to belief in His birth, suffering, and resurrection, an enlargement has been added to the sacrament, even the sealing act of Baptism, the clothing in some sense of the faith which before was naked and had no power without its own law. For the law of baptizing has been imposed, and its form prescribed. 'Go,' says He, 'teach the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' To this law is joined that limitation, 'Except a man be born of water and Spirit, he will not enter into the kingdom of heaven:' and it has bound faith to the necessity of Baptism. Therefore all who afterwards believed were baptized. Then also Paul, when he believed, was baptized." Also in chap. xviii.: "But they whose office it is to baptize know that baptism is not to be entrusted rashly." After urging caution, he adds: "Therefore, according to each one's condition and disposition, and even age, a delay of Baptism is more expedient, especially in the case of little children. For why is it needful that even sponsors be thrust into danger, who both themselves through mortality may fail to fulfil their promises and be deceived by development of a bad disposition? The Lord indeed says, 'Do not forbid them to come to Me.' Let them come therefore while they are growing up, let them come while they are learning,

* The Greek word for *fish* contains the initial letters of Jesus Christ Son of God.

while they are being taught where they may come. Let them become Christians when they are able to know Christ. Why does the innocent age of life hasten to the forgiveness of sins?" After urging delay even upon others, he adds: "If any one understands the importance of Baptism, he will fear rather its reception than its delay. Sound faith is secure of salvation." In chap. vi. of his treatise on *Repentance* Tertullian says: "That laver (or washing) is a sealing of faith; which faith begins and is commended by a faith of repentance. We are not washed in order that we may cease to sin, since we have already been washed in heart." In the matter of Baptism these two works of Tertullian are worthy of careful study. They mark, even by their inconsistencies, a transition of opinion in the early Church on this important subject.

Later quotations from Origen, Cyprian, and Augustine are given on pages 28 and 42. They reveal the tendency of thought in the third and following centuries.

The above are the chief quotations by Christian writers of the first two centuries. They may be verified in Clark's Ante-Nicene Library. But their real significance can be understood only by careful study of other Christian Literature of the same age. The importance given to Baptism as a condition and means of salvation is explained in part by the expositions given in Section i., and in part by the immense importance in those early days of the accession and Baptism of new converts. A dangerous perversion of this importance we see on page 42 in the quotations from Augustine.

Printed by Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

*Fifth Thousand.* *Demy 8vo, paper covers, 1s. 6d.; cloth, 2s. 6d.*

# THE CREDENTIALS OF THE GOSPEL:

## A Statement of the Reason of the Christian Hope.

"If the forces marshalled in defence of the Christian position by Mr. Beet are the same veterans whose colours and facings have been seen before, they certainly present under his command a new front, and the old weapons have been altered into arms of precision. . . . The hinge on which the argument turns is the resurrection of our Lord; and this is handled in a wise, well-informed, and conclusive manner. There is much that is freshly thought and admirably put throughout the book; and, however well read in apologetic literature any one is, he will find much to interest and much to convince in the chapters which deal with the resurrection and the miraculous. At this point Professor Beet makes a distinct advance in the argument, and deserves the thanks of all who are interested in the defence of Christianity. The book is throughout written in an admirable style."—PROF. MARCUS DODS, D.D., in *The Expositor.*

LONDON: WESLEYAN METHODIST BOOK ROOM,
2, CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD, E.C.

---

*Demy 16mo, cloth, 9d.; cloth boards, 1s.*

# THE FIRM FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH:

## A Handbook of Christian Evidences for Sunday School Teachers.

"We do not know any book so well suited for this purpose."
DR. MARCUS DODS in *The Expositor.*

"*Multum in Parvo;* a book which in a few pages sets forth a great and weighty argument in a style perfectly clear and easily understood is surely a great boon. Dr. Beet has conferred a great benefit not merely on the Wesleyan Methodist Church and her teachers, he has made all the Churches a debtor to him."—PROF. IVERACH in *The Thinker.*

WESLEYAN METHODIST SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,
2 & 3, LUDGATE CIRCUS BUILDINGS, LONDON, E.C.

*

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

# COMMENTARIES

ON THE

# EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL.

## ROMANS.

Seventh Edition, price 7*s.* 6*d.*

## CORINTHIANS.

Fifth Edition. 10*s.* 6*d.*

## GALATIANS.

Third Edition. 5*s.*

## EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, and PHILEMON.

Second Thousand. 7*s.* 6*d.*

"Painstaking, reverent, and useful."—*Guardian.*

"The same patient diligence, the wide learning, the beautiful reverence, and scientific insight which have made his Commentaries so helpful. . . . If every age has to write its own commentaries, the present age is happy in the possession of exegetes and commentators of the mental and moral stature of Dr. Beet."—PROF. IVERACH in the *British Weekly.*

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

# The Expositor's Bible.

EDITED BY THE

REV. W. ROBERTSON NICOLL, M.A., LL.D.

*Six Volumes Published Annually.*

*Subscription to each Year's Series, 24s. Separate Volumes, 7s. 6d. each.*

**Genesis.** By the Rev. Professor MARCUS DODS, D.D.

**Exodus.** By the Very Rev. G. A. CHADWICK, D.D.

**Leviticus.** By the Rev. S. H. KELLOGG, D.D.

**Numbers.** By the Rev. R. A. WATSON, D.D.

**Deuteronomy.** By the Rev. Professor ANDREW HARPER, M.A. B.D. [*Preparing.*

**Joshua.** By the Rev. Professor W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D. [*Preparing.*

**Judges and Ruth.** By the Rev. R. A. WATSON, M.A.

**The First Book of Samuel.** (Two Vols.) By the Rev. Professor W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

**The Second Book of Samuel.** By the same Author.

**The Books of Kings.** (Two Vols.) By the Ven. Archdeacon FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S. [*Preparing.*

**The Books of Chronicles.** By the Rev. Professor W. H. BENNETT, M.A. [*Preparing.*

**Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.** By the Rev. Professor W. F. ADENEY, M.A. [*Preparing.*

**Job.** By the Rev. R. A. WATSON, D.D.

**The Psalms.** (Three Vols.) By the Rev. ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D. [*Preparing.*

**Proverbs.** By the Rev. R. F. HORTON, M.A.

**Ecclesiastes.** By the Rev. SAMUEL COX, D.D.

**Isaiah.** (Two Vols.) By the Rev. GEORGE ADAM SMITH, M.A.

**Jeremiah.** By the Rev. C. J. BALL, M.A.

**Ezekiel.** By the Rev. Professor SKINNER, M.A. [*Preparing.*

## The Expositor's Bible—*continued.*

**Daniel.** By the Rev. Professor J. M. Fuller, M.A. [*Preparing.*

**The Minor Prophets.** By the Rev. George Adam Smith, M.A. [*Preparing.*

**St. Matthew.** By the Rev. J. Monro Gibson, D.D.

**St. Mark.** By the Very Rev. G. A. Chadwick, D.D. Fourth Edition.

**St. Luke.** By the Rev. Henry Burton, B.A.

**St. John.** (Two Vols.) By the Rev. Professor Marcus Dods, D.D.

**The Acts of the Apostles.** (Two Vols.) By the Rev. Professor G. T. Stokes, D.D.

**Romans.** By the Rev. H. C. G. Moule, M.A. [*Preparing.*

**Corinthians I.** By the Rev. Professor Marcus Dods, D.D. Third Edition.

**Galatians.** By the Rev. Professor G. G. Findlay, B.A. Third Edition.

**Ephesians.** By the same Author.

**Philippians.** By the Rev. Principal Rainy, D.D.

**Colossians and Philemon.** By the Rev. Alexander Maclaren, D.D.

**Thessalonians.** By the Rev. James Denney, B.D.

**The Pastoral Epistles.** By the Rev. Alfred Plummer, D.D.

**Hebrews.** By the Rev. Principal T. C. Edwards, M.A.

**St. James and St. Jude.** By the Rev. Alfred Plummer, D.D.

**Peter.** By the Rev. Professor Lumby, D.D. [*Preparing.*

**The Epistles of St. John.** By the Right Rev. W. Alexander, D.D., D.C.L. Fourth Thousand.

**Revelation.** By the Rev. Professor W. Milligan, D.D.

DATE DUE

MAR 2 4 1975
MAR 2 1982
MAR 2 9 1983

GAYLORD
PRINTED IN U.S.A.

265.1
B415

Beet, Joseph Agar

AUTHOR

A treatise on Christian baptism.

TITLE

26568

| Date Due | Borrower's Name |
| --- | --- |
| MAR 2 4 1975 | G. Lawton |
| APR 7 1975 | renewed |

265.1
B415 Beet, Joseph Agar
A treatise on Christian baptism.

26568